



PRESS RELEASE
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OUTLAWS MOTORCYCLE CLUB LEADER CONVICTED OF RACKETEERING

A Federal Jury in Tampa today found James Lee Wheeler, a/k/a Frank Wheeler, the national and international president of the Outlaws Motorcycle Club, guilty of conspiracy to commit racketeering, racketeering, and obstruction of justice arising out of his involvement in the Outlaws Motorcycle Club. The trial lasted six weeks. The jury deliberated for three and one-half days before reaching its verdict. Because of prior felony convictions, Wheeler faces a possible term of life imprisonment on the racketeering and racketeering conspiracy offenses. Sentencing has been scheduled by United States District Judge James D. Whittemore for January 12, 2004.

The Wheeler case is the fourth significant Outlaws racketeering prosecution in the Middle District of Florida in recent years. In 1995, 14 members of the Outlaws Motorcycle Club were convicted of various racketeering and drug offenses after a four-month trial. In 1997, four Outlaws members were convicted of racketeering and drug charges following a two-month trial. In 2001, Harry "Taco" Bowman, the former national and international

president of the Outlaws, was convicted of racketeering and related charges. Since 1995, a number of other Outlaws members pled guilty to various criminal offenses. Wheeler's conviction brings to 31, the number of Outlaws who have been convicted. Those convicted include the presidents of chapters located in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Orlando, Daytona Beach, and Fort Lauderdale, three regional presidents, and the last two national and international presidents of the Outlaws.

The jury found Wheeler guilty of conspiring with other individuals to violate the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) and using the Outlaws Motorcycle Club and its local chapters throughout the United States as a criminal enterprise to participate in a pattern of racketeering activity.

The successful prosecution of Wheeler was the result of an extensive investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Daytona Beach Police Department. Assistant United States Attorneys James A. Muench and Katherine M. Ho handled the Wheeler prosecution.

United States Attorney Paul I. Perez praised the efforts of the federal and local law enforcement agencies and stated, "Violent gang activity poses a substantial threat to the citizens of our community. The Outlaws Motorcycle Club has an extensive track record of violence that involves murder, assault, arson, robbery, extortion, and other crimes intended to intimidate citizens and to remain the dominate criminal motorcycle club in the State of Florida. This office will continue to vigorously pursue violent gangs and bring their members to justice."